DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 162 133 CE 018 556

TITLE	Methods and Materials for Teaching Occupational Survival Skills. Introduction.
INSTITUTION	Illinois Univ., Urbana. Dept. of Vocational and Technical Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Illinois State Office of Education, Springfield. Div. of Adult Vocational and Technical Education.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	22p.; For related documents see CE 018 557-569
AVAILABLE FROM	Curriculum Publications Clearinghouse, Western Illinois University, 76B Horrabin Hall, Macomb, Illinois 61455 (entire fourteen-unit set, $15.00)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Education; Adult Education; *Career Education; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Conflict; Creativity; Curriculum Guides; Employee Responsibility; *Human Relations; Interpersonal Relationship; *Job Skills; Leadership; *Learning Modules; Motivation; Organization; Organizational Change; Organizations (Groups); Problem Solving; Self Concept; Senior High Schools; Vocational Adjustment; Vocational Education; *Work Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Twelve instructional modules, concerned with the human aspects of working in organizations, have been designed for utilization at various educational levels ranging from high school to adult and continuing education and in both academic and vocational programs. The modular titles are the following: (1) working in organizations, (2) motivation for work, (3) understanding self, (4) interpersonal relations, (5) effective communications, (6) using creativity at work, (7) problem solving, (8) authority and responsibility, (9) leadership, (10) coping with conflict, (11) coping with change, and (12) adopting and planning for the future. Each module is organized into five or more sessions and each session is arranged according to the following components: topic; objective; skills emphasized; importance of session topic; materials and equipment needed (copies of student worksheets and handouts and transparency masters are included); activity description; and follow-up. Teacher resources including the titles, sources, and descriptions of books, articles, and audiovisual aids conclude each module. A sixteen-item multiple choice test was designed for each module (available in document CE 018 569). In developing the modules research was conducted on competencies that workers need in order to maintain an occupation, and the modules were field tested in several settings. (The modules are CE 018 557-568.) (JB)

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Methods And Materials For Teaching Occupational Survival Skills

Introduction

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CE 018 556

Methods and Materials for Teaching Occupational Survival Skills

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These curriculum materials have been developed and published under a contractual agreement between the Illinois Office of Education, Department of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education, Research and Development, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777 and the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project staff wishes to express their gratitude to the many people who provided expertise, services, and support to the development of the curriculum modules. Special thanks is expressed to the students and teachers who provided feedback during the field testing stages of the project. This information was extremely useful in revising the modules.

Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Rupert N. Evans, Acting Chairman, Department of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Illinois, Urbana, for his encouragement, leadership, and guidance throughout the project. The project staff is also indebted to the staff of the Research and Development Section, Department of Adult, Vocational and Technical Education, Springfield, Illinois, for their support.

The research efforts of Sharon Lund O'Neil, Thomas Scanlan, Joyce Nies, and Kent Frison, conducted during the outset of the project, helped to provide the basis for the development of the curriculum modules. As contributing authors to the early versions of various modules, the project staff is grateful to Norma Turok, Glenda Huffman, Charles Jackson, and Christopher Kalangi.

For typewriting, proofreading, correcting, and reproduction of the modules throughout the project, special thanks is given to Anna McClintock, Evelyn Stewart, Ruthann Ryan, Colleen Nichols, Steve Hauersperger, Barbara Cain, and Terry McKenzie. Delmar Burgin, Betty Richards, and David Turner provided expert administrative assistance to the project.

Robert E. Nelson
Project Director

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Module Tests

The twelve Occupational Survival Skills Modules are not numbered. Instructors are encouraged to use Modules in any order that best fits their needs.

Introduction

Occupational Survival Skills are concerned with the "human" aspects of working in organizations.[1] These "human" aspects may be as important, or even more important, than the "technical" aspects of work. The curriculum guide Methods and Materials for Teaching Occupational Survival Skills is a resource for instructors who are (a) preparing young people with entry level skills or (b) helping people in the work force improve their present work skills. Attitudes, perceptions, and motivations of people toward work are important to their survival in occupations. Rather than concentrating on specific technical skills, the emphasis of these curriculum materials is on acquiring conceptual skills such as planning, communication, and problem solving.

Teaching Occupational Survival Skills

A primary element in teaching Occupational Survival Skills is active student involvement in the teaching-learning process. Therefore, a highly

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[1] Robert E. Nelson, "Survival Skills: Mastering the Human Aspects of Work." American Vocational Journal, November, 1977, Vol. 52, No. 8, pp, 64-66.

action-oriented approach has been developed, using three general types of activities to stimulate student involvement:

1. Individualized activities which encourage self examination. Students act, in part, as their own teachers. The learning process is mostly internal, with the materials and the instructor stimulating students to examine and evaluate themselves in relation to work situations.
2. Activities which involve interaction among students and interaction of students with a variety of community resources. By sharing knowledge, experience, and personal reactions, students act as peer teachers for each other. The instructor assists students by acting as a participant and facilitator.
3. Activities which involve the analysis and synthesis of problems provide opportunities for students to gain valuable experience and practice which will be useful to them in work situations as well as in other life situations.

Instructional Modules

The curriculum guide Methods and Materials for Teaching Occupational Survival Skills is divided into twelve instructional modules:

Working in Organizations
Motivation for Work
Understanding Self
Interpersonal Relations
Effective Communications
Using Creativity at Work
Problem Solving
Authority and Responsibility
Leadership
Coping with Conflict
Coping with Change
Adapting and Planning for the Future

A test section for student evaluation is also included with the instructional materials.

The cover sheet of each module includes the overall module objective, a listing of session topics, and an illustration pertinent to the module. This page can be used to make a transparency to introduce the module. The second item included in each module is an overview of the module topic. The overviews are primarily for the teacher; however, the overviews have been written at a reading level which makes them suitable for use as handouts to orient students to the content of the modules.

Module Components

Each module is divided into five or more sessions. Each session can be completed in approximately fifty minutes of class time. Each session is arranged according to the following components:

TOPIC
OBJECTIVE
SURVIVAL SKILLS EMPHASIZED
IMPORTANCE
MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT
ACTIVITY
FOLLOW-UP

Each session deals with a particular TOPIC. Each session TOPIC pertains to a specific aspect of the module objective.

The OBJECTIVES of the sessions are mostly affective in nature, although some emphasis is placed on cognitive objectives.

The heading SURVIVAL SKILLS EMPHASIZED includes a listing of specific skills contained in the lesson (see Development of the Modules on page 10 for a further explanation of the specific occupational survival skills):

Getting along with others Punctuality Following Instructions

The SURVIVAL SKILLS EMPHASIZED are highlighted in this manner to alert the instructor to specific skills which should receive extra attention during the class period. These skills may be listed on the chalkboard or they may be discussed as part of the activity. The SURVIVAL SKILLS EMPHASIZED are highlighted in both the content and the process of the sessions. For example, the skill, "following instructions" might be emphasized in a case study which describes the problems of a worker who has difficulty following instructions; or it might be emphasized in an activity in which students must follow specific instructions. Students should be encouraged to consider how the skills listed relate to the class activities. At the end of the class period, the instructor may wish to review the skills listed to provide closure for the session.

IMPORTANCE is a summary of the reasons for studying a particular topic. The instructor may wish to share the IMPORTANCE information with students to help them understand the purpose of an activity. This may be done at the beginning of the session to introduce students to the session; or it may be used as a summary at the end of the session.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT are listed for the instructor's convenience. A copy of each Student Worksheet, Transparency, Handout, or other materials needed can be found at the end of the session. The Student Worksheets have been designed to be reproduced for individual students. The worksheets can be made into transparencies so students can respond to the worksheet information as a group discussion activity or individually writing the responses on separate sheets of paper.

The ACTIVITY section includes a step-by-step description of how to conduct each activity. Discussion questions and guidelines are included to help the instructor to cover the important points of the activity. In addition, some activities have one or more VARIATIONS in order to make the activities as versatile as possible. Instructors are also encouraged to adapt the activities in any way which is appropriate to their classes.

The FOLLOW-UP section includes discussion questions or other material the instructor can use to assist students in summarizing and evaluating their experiences during the activity. The depth of FOLLOW-UP questions used in a particular class should be determined by the grade and ability level of students. Flexibility with the FOLLOW-UP section allows the teacher to use the activity in various educational programs from junior high school to adult education. Instructors may also wish to supplement the FOLLOW-UP with materials which are pertinent to their particular classes.

The last page of each module lists resources teachers may wish to use to supplement the module activities. The resources listed have been selected to be of practical use to teachers. These resources include activities, reading materials and audiovisual aids which may be helpful to students. Teachers are encouraged to use these resources as well as other resources to provide experiences which will be meaningful to their particular classes.

Tests

The last section of the curriculum guide contains tests for each of the twelve modules. The individual module tests can be used to evaluate student performance after completing each module. A sixteen item multiple choice

test was constructed for each of the twelve modules. Test items were formulated at the knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis levels of the cognitive domain of the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.[2] The use of multiple choice items for the module tests offers the instructor an opportunity to evaluate student performance in an objective manner. Instructors are encouraged to use other methods to evaluate student performance in conjunction with the tests. The case problems included in the modules may be used as an alternative method of evaluating student performance. Observation of student involvement in class activities may be used to evaluate students' affective responses.

A number of standardized tests are available to measure students' affective responses toward work. For example the Career Maturity Inventory-Attitude Scale[3] might be used as a pre-test and a post-test to help evaluate the outcomes of teaching occupational survival skills.

Need for Teaching Occupational Survival Skills

A wealth of materials and techniques have been developed in the past to teach vocational and technical skills. In addition, many resources are available to help students acquire job-seeking skills. However, Occupational Survival Skills focus on yet another dimension of career preparations -- the skills workers need to maintain themselves in occupations once they are employed.

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[2] B. S. Bloom, et al, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: I. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1956.

[3] J. O. Crites, Career Maturity Inventory-Attitude Scale. DelMonte Research Park, Montery, California: CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1973.

Work continues to be a central activity in people's lives despite changes in (a) attitudes of workers, (b) economic conditions, and (c) social demands. Work is not only necessary for economic survival, but work is also a means of achieving self-fulfillment. Work is essential for living in our society. Many aspects of daily living depend on a person's work environment, and particularly on the satisfaction and enjoyment a person gains from work.

Changes in Work Situations

Recent advances in American technology have created a complex situation for workers. The transitions from an agrarian to an industrial society during the nineteenth centry, and more recently to a technological society, have had a great impact on methods of doing work. During the past ten years there have been far-reaching changes in work itself and the meaning of work to individuals. However, there appears to be no forseeable end to work, no crisis of discontented workers, and no sweeping humanization of jobs in the near future. Work continues to be an important aspect of our lives, and people are becoming more and more concerned about how their work can fulfill some of their life goals.

Responsibility of the Schools

Part of the responsibility for preparing people for work rests with the schools. In many respects, the schools must bridge the gap between the private lives of families and the work of society. Modern technology poses problems for the schools. One problem is related to the knowledge explosion. For example, about half of what students learn today may be obsolete within ten years, and about half of what they will need to know ten years from now is not known today.

In the past, young people could acquire the education they needed for a lifetime during the first 15 to 20 years of their lives. This education prepared them both for an occupation and for adult membership in society. However, educators are now faced with the challenge of preparing students for an uncertain future. Because changes are occurring so rapidly, students need to acquire different types of skills to help them cope with these changes. Beyond adequate levels of technical skills and opportunities for placement, educators need to help students develop certain attitudes, perceptions, and motivations regarding employment.

Occupational Mobility

One likely result of rapid change is an increasing rate of occupational mobility. Since new occupations are quickly arising and other occupations are becoming obsolete, workers need to prepare themselves for a series of occupations rather than just one occupation. In addition, workers may wish to change occupations in order to achieve certain personal and work goals. Young people who are preparing to enter the work force need to have the ability to make informed decisions regarding the work they will do in the future. In addition, adults now in the work force need to be able to adapt to rapid change.

Educational Approach

Career education is one approach used by educators to help prepare students for their future occupations. The concept of career education may be divided into three phases. The first phase involves career awareness activities beginning in the elementary grades to introduce students to the world of work and career opportunities. Through career exploration activities

during the second phase, students begin planning for eventual career choices. Finally, technical skill development is emphasized during the third phase which is the career preparation stage.

Through career education, students gain knowledge about the world of work which will help them make informed career choices. However, the humanistic aspects of work, which are important in maintaining an occupation, are often neglected in many formal educational programs. In addition to technical skills, workers need to develop the ability to adapt and grow in their occupations. They also need skills which will permit them to move from one occupation to another with a minimum of retraining. Workers need to develop skills which will help them to live satisfying personal and work lives. The Occupational Survival Skills modules have been developed to address these needs.

Skills Needed by Workers

Three general categories of skills are needed by workers: human relations skills, organizational skills, and coping skills.

- Human relations skills are basic to all human interactions, both on and off the job. While technical skills are essential on the job, interpersonal problems are frequent reasons for conflict and job dissatisfaction. Workers need to have knowledge of human behavior and how relations between people affect productivity and personal well-being. Effective interpersonal skills can be developed through an understanding of self and others. Communication skill, another aspect of human relations, is also important for workers at all levels.

- Organizational skills are also important to success in an occupation. In order to understand the importance of individual jobs within an organization, workers should be aware of the reasons for forming organizations and what happens in organizations. Workers should also understand why people work and the factors which motivate people to do their best work. Skills in creativity, problem solving, and decision making are also important to occupational success.

- Coping skills enable workers to meet unexpected problems or difficult situations in ways which are mutually acceptable. Workers should be aware of possible future trends which will affect their personal lives as well as their work. Even more important, however, is that workers should be prepared to identify, confront, and help solve problems resulting from changes within their organizations as well as changes brought about by a variety of forces in the environment which affect organizations.

Development of the Modules[4]

The initial task in developing the Occupational Survival Skills modules was to identify the competencies that workers need in order to maintain an occupation. This was accomplished through an extensive survey of current occupational literature, as well as information obtained from workers, educators and students. A list of over 500 skills was compiled. An analysis

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[4]Robert E. Nelson, "Model for Development and Implementation of General Occupational Skills and Attitudes," International Journal of Instructional Media, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1976-77, pp. 175-184.

of this list by over 300 persons resulted in a list of 27 basic skills which are necessary for minimum acceptable performance in an occupation:

1. punctuality
2. dependability
3. getting along with others
4. working as a team member
5. organizing the work activities of others
6. understanding written information
7. basic writing skills
8. basic speaking skills
9. being neat and clean in appearance
10. maintaining good health
11. knowing your strengths and weaknesses
12. giving an honest day's work
13. loyalty to your organization
14. making independent decisions
15. using initiative and imagination
16. knowing what is expected
17. basic arithmetic skills
18. knowing how to use materials and equipment
19. locating information
20. having specialized training
21. knowledge of operating procedures
22. following instructions
23. working without close supervision
24. working under pressure
25. adjusting to work situations
26. managing time and materials effectively
27. following safety regulations

Research on Occupational Survival Skills

A study was conducted to determine how important workers consider each of these 27 basic skills in maintaining their own occupations.[5] The study

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[5]Sharon Lund O'Neil, "Worker Perceptions of Skills Necessary for Survival in the World of Work." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1976. Also see Sharon Lund O'Neil and Robert E. Nelson, "Career Maintenance and Mobility Factors--Occupational Survival Skills," Journal of Vocational Education Research, Spring, 1976, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 1-19; "Worker Perceptions of Occupational Survival Skills," Journal of Industrial Teacher Education, Winter, 1977, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 34-42; "Workers View Occupational Survival As a Combination of Skills," Delta Pi Epsilon Journal, January, 1978, Vol. XX, No. 1, pp. 13-19.

revealed that although there were some differences among the opinions of different occupational groups, most of the skills were considered important by workers regardless of their occupations.

Two additional studies were conducted to determine the opinions of (a) students and parents,[6] and (b) teachers, counselors, and school administrators[7] regarding the importance of teaching occupational survival skills. A high degree of agreement among the different educational groups indicated that these groups felt that certain skills should be taught in the schools. However, differences did exist between the opinions of workers and the various educational groups regarding the importance of specific skills.[8]

Instructional Strategies

A final study was conducted to determine what instructional strategies teachers would be most likely to use for teaching occupational survival skills.[9]

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[6]Thomas J. Scanlan, "A Study to Determine the Opinions of Students and Parents Concerning the Teaching of Skills Necessary for Survival in the World of Work." Unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1976. Also see Robert E. Nelson and Thomas J. Scanlan, "Parents' and Students' Perceptions of Occupational Survival Skills," Vocational Guidance Quarterly, March, 1977, Volume 25, No. 3, pp. 217-224.

[7]Kent D. Frison, "A Study to Determine the Opinions of School Personnel Concerning the Teaching of Skills Necessary for Survival in the World of Work." Unpublished master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1975.

[8]Robert E. Nelson, "Comparison of Perceptions Concerning Occupational Survival Skills, Journal of Studies in Technical Careers, pending publication.

[9]Joyce Nies Richardson, "A Study to Identify the Instructional Strategies Teachers Would Be Most Likely to Use to Teach the Skills Necessary for Survival in the World of Work." Unpublished master's thesis, 1976. Also see Robert E. Nelson and Joyce Nies Richardson, "Instructional Techniques for Teaching Essential Work Skills," Journal of Industrial Teacher Education, pending publication.

The results of this study indicated that teaching strategies vary with the specific content being taught. Overall, the teachers surveyed favored strategies in which students are actively involved and interact with each other. The study also indicated specific teaching strategies such as group discussion, problem solving, and role-playing were considered by teachers to be most appropriate for teaching the content areas included in the occupational survival skills. Some examples of strategies employed in the modules include the following:

- Role playing is included to allow students to explore different kinds of behavior, and to experience the feelings that may arise in work situations.

- Case studies are used to allow students to practice problem identification and problem solving skills in true-to-life situations.

- Games are employed to illustrate specific kinds of behavior and interactions which students are likely to encounter on the job.

- Group discussions are used to encourage students to examine their own thoughts and attitudes, and compare them to the thoughts and attitudes of others.

- Individual self examination activities are designed to help students become aware of their own feelings, attitudes, and behavior, and allow them to decide on changes they may wish to make.

Twelve Modules

Because the 27 occupational survival skills which had been identified were too narrow in scope to be taught as individual units of study, 12 broader topics for instruction were developed to be used as modules of instruction. These 12 topics were selected so that the specific survival skills could be integrated into them. The 12 module topics identified below attempt to provide answers to the following questions relating to work.

- Working in Organizations: Why do people start organizations? Why do people join organizations? How do organizations work? What are some problems of working in an organization? How can these problems be solved?

- Motivation for Work: What is motivation? What is work? Why do people work? What makes people try to do their best at work? How can workers achieve satisfaction in their work?

- Understanding Self: How do we see ourselves? How do our self concepts affect our work? How can workers' feeling affect their work? How do people's values affect them in work situations?

- Interpersonal Relations: How do feelings affect interpersonal relations? How do people's motives affect their relationships with others? Why are relationships with others important in work situations? How can interpersonal relations be improved?

- Effective Communications: What is involved in the communication process? Why is effective communication important on the job? What are some

barriers to communication? Why is it important to write, read, and speak well on the job?

- Creativity: What is creativity? Why is creativity important to job success? What are specific ways of being creative in work situations? How can a creative worker be helpful to the organization?

- Authority and Responsibility: What is authority? Why do certain people in work situations have authority? Why do people accept authority at work? What does job responsibility mean? What do employers expect of workers? How can people be responsible workers?

- Problem Solving: What are the steps in problem solving? How can problems at work be identified and solved? How can workers use the problem solving approach in their jobs?

- Coping with Conflict: What is conflict? How do conflicts arise in work situations? What are the basic sources of conflict? How can conflicts be resolved? How can conflicts be prevented?

- Leadership: What skills does a good leader need to have? What are the styles of leadership? What makes a supervisor a good leader? How can leadership qualities be developed?

- Coping with Change: Is change inevitable? Why do people accept or reject changes? How do changes in work affect the lifestyles of workers? Can some changes be anticipated? Why can some workers accept changes more easily than others? How can workers cope with changes at work?

- Adapting and Planning for the Future: What major changes are likely to occur in working patterns in the future? How can changes in work be anticipated? How will workers be affected by these changing patterns in work? How can workers plan their lives in terms of possible changes?

Sources of Materials

Materials that are relevant to the teaching of occupational survival skills are available in bits and pieces from a variety of sources. Psychologists, sociologists, economists, and educators have all contributed to knowledge and approaches which apply to the teaching of occupational survival skills. The diffusion of the materials had made it very difficult for teachers and students to find useful materials. The task of the Occupational Survival Skills project staff, therefore, was to gather materials from different sources, and adapt them for use in teaching. The adaptations were specifically aimed toward making the materials easy to use, effective, acceptable to teachers, and at appropriate reading and conceptual levels for students. The materials were developed in modular form and then field tested to discover needed improvements.

Field Testing the Modules

Teachers in a variety of academic and vocational fields were instrumental in field testing and suggesting improvements for the modules. The responses of students during field testing were valuable in providing the project staff with guidelines for needed revisions. The modules were revised and rewritten on the basis of the feedback received from students and teachers during field testing.

Use of the Modules

The Occupational Survival Skills modules have been used successfully with a wide range of students in a variety of educational settings. Various segments of the modules have been utilized with students at educational levels ranging from high school to adult and continuing education and in various academic programs as well as vocational programs. Some specific settings are listed below:

1. Office occupations classes
2. Classes for students with special needs (Secondary Work Experience Program)
3. Cooperative Work Training Programs (CWT)
4. Work Experience and Career Exploration Programs (WECEP)
5. Distributive Education
6. Career Education Programs
7. Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Programs
8. Community College Communications classes
9. Office Management classes
10. General Business classes
11. Classes in specific business procedures

The Occupational Survival Skills modules are suited for use in a wide variety of settings. As is true for most curriculum materials, the modules should not be considered a fixed or rigid course of study. These materials should be adapted and used in any manner which meets the specific objectives of teachers and students.